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JUN 30 2008

07/07/2008

1-36 (canceled)

37. (currently amended) A compact material comprising:

70 to 97 vol % component A comprising alpha- and beta-SiAlON and a and an amorphous or partially crystalline grain-boundary phase; and

5 to 20 3 to 30 vol.% of component B comprising a hard material is in globular form and an average grain size of 1-5 microns has an average grain size;

wherein when the compact is sintered to form a sintered compact having and has a sintered surface, the sintered compact has surface and a hardness of at least 1550 HV 10 and wherein said compact has an alpha-SiAlON gradient which decreases from outside the compact the sintered surface to an inside of the sintered compact;

wherein the alpha-SiAlON content of the sintered surface ranges has an alpha-SiAlON content of up to 100%,

wherein said hard material is SiC, at least one of SiC, Ti(C,N), TiC, TiN, a carbide of an element from one of groups IVb, Vb and VIb of the periodic table, scandium carbide, scandium oxycarbide or a nitride of an element from one of groups IVa, Vb and VIb of the periodic table, wherein the state of the hard material remains unchanged after sintering;

wherein the content of grain-boundary phase is less than 10 vol.% and comprises phases of aluminum containing melilite or disilicate;

wherein in the sintered state inside of the said sintered compact comprises from 1.5 to 50 vol.% the amount of alpha-SiAlON present ranges from 10 to 90 vol.%, and

wherein the amount of beta-SiAlON ranges from 10 to 90 vol.%.